

## Communication is key to ending vaccine hesitancy

*The Financial Times* (letter), 25 May 2021. From:  
<https://www.ft.com/content/1ac49d77-76c6-4e56-9659-880dc91b5dff>

From Professor Costas Milas, Management School, University of Liverpool, Liverpool.

Your Big Read on Covid-19 vaccines (“Will we ever reach herd immunity?”, [Report](#), May 24) makes the valid point that if the vaccine-hesitant cannot be persuaded to change their minds many countries will find it difficult to tackle the Covid-19 virus. This in turn will make it more likely that these countries will remain vulnerable to surges that could require new lockdown restrictions.

As far as the UK is concerned, vaccine hesitancy does not appear to be a big issue since it is only 7 per cent, based on the latest Office for National Statistics data. Nevertheless, there are significant differences among ethnic groups. In fact, vaccine hesitancy rises to 10 per cent in the case of Asian/Asian-British and further up to 30 per cent in the case of Black/Black British people.

It is also noted that most individuals have friends and family within their ethnic group. In fact, people who are more exposed to warnings against the vaccine from family and friends are also less willing to take it. A recent IMF study found that a one percentage point increase in the number of family and friends who are in favour of the vaccine triggers a half percentage point increase in their own probability of getting the vaccine. With this in mind, public health authorities should step up their efforts in communicating to the above ethnic groups that vaccines are safe and effective. Doing so could go a long way towards tackling vaccine hesitancy and therefore reducing the risk of further economically damaging (local) lockdowns.